



Department of Justice

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"THE WAR ON CRIME: THE END OF THE BEGINNING"

ADDRESS OF

JOHN N. MITCHELL
ATTORNEY GENERAL
OF THE UNITED STATES

BEFORE THE

ATTORNEY GENERAL'S CONFERENCE
ON CRIME REDUCTION

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I want to add my welcome to those you have already received at the opening of this conference. I am indeed pleased with the fine attendance at this important meeting of law enforcement executives. I thank you for responding to my invitation, and I firmly believe that our labors here can produce new advances in the nation's war on crime.

I do not hesitate to use the term "war," for that is exactly what it is. There is nothing controversial about this war. There is the side of law, justice, honesty, and public safety. And there is the side of lawlessness, dishonesty, human exploitation, and violence. I consider our meeting here in Washington a strategy conference on our side--a conference among allied officers over the maps of tomorrow's battlefield.

To continue the analogy, we meet at a critical point in the war against crime. Through the decade of the 1960s the crime rate

in the United States soared. It not only increased, but the increase kept increasing. In the 10 years from 1960 to 1970, serious crime as measured by the FBI Uniform Crime Index rose 176 percent. In some of our largest cities, including the capital of our nation, the streets in the heart of the business district were considered by many to be unsafe at night. There was no blinking the fact that we were beset by an alarming crime wave, and many Americans believed our society was beginning to crack at the seams.

I will not go into the reasons for this crime wave. Some said that fighting crime was a matter of social reform--if we had a better society free of social ills we would have less crime. In the long run they had a point, but that was small comfort to last night's victim of mugging on the city street. It was a little like sitting on a hill philosophizing about erosion control while a flash flood is carrying away your town.

In 1968 Richard Nixon called for decisive action against the crime wave in this country. He recognized that Federal jurisdiction is limited to Federal crimes, and that the first and main lines of defense against crime were the local and state peace officers. But he

also knew that law enforcement across the nation desperately needed national leadership and national example. When he was elected President he instituted a comprehensive drive against crime--a many-faceted program that marshalled every Federal enforcement arm. He also asked for and won a sharp acceleration in Federal financial aid to state and local enforcement agencies. The nation suddenly found that it had leadership in the war on crime.

At the same time the local and state enforcement agencies across the country were directing renewed efforts in the same war. Many of them applied added funds for better equipment, more manpower, better training. More support has also come from the public and from private groups, such as the U. S. Chamber of Commerce, which has published educational booklets about crime and has helped in other ways.

Altogether, the nation renewed its attack on crime. There were few who were sitting on the hill philosophizing. There were more who were in town throwing sandbags into the breach.

Today we are seeing the first encouraging results of this monumental effort by the nation's peace officers. Fear is being swept from the streets of some--though not all--American cities. In the first quarter of 1971, as you know, 60 American cities showed

an actual decrease in the number of crimes. And while serious crime continued to increase in the nation as a whole, the rate of increase is finally slowing down. Only last week the FBI's annual Uniform Crime Report for 1970 confirmed this trend. In 1968 crime had increased 17 percent over the previous year, 12 percent in 1969 and 11 percent in 1970. Moreover, in the great cities of the country-- those with 250,000 or more people--serious crime increased by 18 percent in 1968, 9 percent in 1969 and 6 percent in 1970.

Now I don't wish to make too much out of these figures. We can take some encouragement, but not much comfort. We have the trend going in the right direction, but that trend is still too tentative to let us shout very loud. To go back to my analogy, the enemy's advance has been slowed, but he is not yet retreating. I'd like to think the situation can be described in Winston Churchill's cautious words when the Allies had stalled Nazi expansion and opened a new front in Africa in the fall of 1942.

"Now this is not the end," he said. "It is not even the beginning of the end. But it is, perhaps, the end of the beginning."

So this benchmark calls upon us to assess our strategy, to exchange our experiences in penetrating the enemy's vulnerable spots, to learn from each other's successes and failures. Here at this conference we can redirect our forces and mount an even stronger offensive against crime.

In doing so, I wish to emphasize that this conference is and must be a mutual exchange of ideas between all jurisdictions. The Federal Government is not here to dispense some higher wisdom, but to trade ideas with all the others on the firing line. We have anticipated sharing the experience, for example, of the police chiefs from the 60 cities showing a reduction in crime. Each of us has his contribution to make, and I for one would like to share with you some of the reasons why, from the Federal viewpoint, I am encouraged in this war on crime.

First, we have legislative weapons that were not available before. The Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 provided for, among other things, court-authorized wiretapping. While the previous Administration did not see fit to use this weapon that Congress had given it, President Nixon sanctioned its use as one

of his first acts of office. Since then it has proved to be an extremely effective method of obtaining evidence in organized crime cases where other methods are ineffective or too dangerous. In 1970, more than two out of every three messages intercepted by Federal investigators were incriminating, and for every Federal wiretap there was an average of between three and four arrests.

When President Nixon took office he called for other anti-crime legislation, and most of it was passed by Congress. This includes the Organized Crime Control Act of 1970, which provided better means of enforcing laws and securing evidence in organized crime cases. It included the Comprehensive Drug Abuse Prevention and Control Act of 1970, which provided stronger enforcement tools and penalties against drug traffickers. And it included the District of Columbia Court Reform and Criminal Procedure Act of 1970, which has provided the tools for further reducing crime in the one major urban area entirely within the Federal jurisdiction.

Without waiting for this legislation, President Nixon and his Administration took every step to escalate the war on crime. The President established the National Council on Organized Crime, which mobilized all appropriate Federal agency heads and the special expertise

of their staffs. I am able to report that the number of organized crime and gambling figures convicted as a result of FBI investigations has risen sharply--from 281 in fiscal 1968 to 631 in fiscal 1971.

In the difficult area of narcotics control, the Federal Government provided national leadership. All appropriate Federal agencies have increased their arrests and confiscations. In perhaps the most significant breakthrough in this field, the Turkish Government has agreed to halt its opium-growing industry. We all know that narcotics control is a very persistent problem, but we also know that as we defeat it we will be defeating an important cause of crime.

The District of Columbia has been the scene of remarkable achievements. In fiscal 1971 the volume of crime in Washington, D. C. was 18.7 percent lower than in fiscal 1970. That is the first fiscal year in which crime dropped since such records have been kept beginning in 1956. Figures have just been published showing a further decrease of 10.6 percent for the month of July compared to the previous July, which in itself showed a decline over the same month in 1969.

These Administration actions that I have just described have been confined to the limited area of Federal jurisdiction. I turn now to the far broader area in which Federal support has had an impact on all jurisdictions, and with which you are more familiar. I refer to the Law Enforcement Assistance Administration, which was created by

the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968. At President Nixon's urging this agency's budget is now more than 10 times its original budget of three years ago. It grew from \$63 million in fiscal 1969 to a fiscal 1972 appropriation of almost \$700 million.

In the past three years, police programs have benefited either directly or indirectly from more than \$370 million in LEAA funds.

There are thousands of police programs under way in the United States which would not have begun--could not have been created--without LEAA funds. Partly because of the LEAA program there are more policemen on the street, there are more patrol units, and better items of police equipment than there were three years ago.

Police communications are being improved partly because LEAA has provided more than \$38 million to finance better local and state systems, control centers and much-needed equipment.

Police ability to deal with bombings is being improved because LEAA has committed well over \$2 million for special training of local and state officers, for bomb disposal research, and for technical aid. Graduates of LEAA's bomb disposal course have paid it the supreme compliment, saying it has saved lives and prevented injuries.

A number of LEAA programs are helping to improve police safety--and provide better equipment. Among these efforts was the IACP's bomb data center, and the testing of different police armor vests by LEAA's new Law Enforcement Standards Laboratory.

Take any area of the country and we see LEAA funds at work in important programs. As you know, there have been and are key LEAA projects among those 60 cities which have recorded substantial crime decreases during the first quarter of this year.

One important activity, the Law Enforcement Educational Program, is very visible not only to you as police administrators, but to all members of police departments. To date, over 60,000 police officers have received educational benefits to help them in their professionalization.

All of this, coupled with the other avenues of Federal action that I mentioned, gives me a positive feeling about the national war on crime. Many of these innovations, such as the new enforcement weapons against organized crime and some of the significant LEAA projects, are young programs. We have only partially seen their effects. As they gather momentum I believe we will see more crippling blows against the enemy.

It is true that not all the results are going in our favor. The number of police killings each year is still on the increase. This abominable and shocking trend must be reversed. Although federal jurisdiction in this area is limited, President Nixon has directed the FBI to join in the investigation of a police killing when asked to do so by the local authority. Equally important, all federal investigative agencies are on notice to share immediately with state or local police any information they receive about possible police killings. In addition, the President has proposed legislation to Congress to assist the families of officers killed in the line of duty.

The number of police murders reminds us very forcibly that the war against crime is far from over. We have by no means reached the beginning of the end, but I believe we are at the end of the beginning. We have mobilized our resources. We have established communications and strategic links between our various commands. And in my opinion, most important of all, we have strong national leadership. We have a President who has gone on record in no uncertain terms in support of the law enforcer. Only a few weeks ago he summarized the situation when he told a gathering of local peace officers:

When you go home, tell your colleagues that the era of permissiveness with regard to law enforcement is at an end in the United States of America. Tell your

colleagues that...in terms of support of the President of the United States and the Attorney General, we back law enforcement officials in their attempts to reestablish respect for law, in their attempts to enforce the law with justice.

Gentlemen, that statement sums up the present situation. The climate for decisive inroads against crime was never better. We have the resources, the capabilities, the support of the public, the leadership of the President. Here at this conference we have the ability to marshal these assets even more effectively to assure the peace and safety of American society.